

Upstander Connection

Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance

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A Peek at the New Museum



A visit to the Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance on a busy day can seem like you're walking into controlled chaos.

When the 6,000 sq. ft. exhibit space, which can only fit 250 visitors at one time, is filled with

one or more school classes, police officers from a diversity workshop, groups of downtown conventioners, tourists, locals, Museum members and others, staff must perform an intricate dance to control traffic, moving folks through tours, special exhibit areas and the theater in unison to prevent gridlock. Still, there is a finite amount of space, and when it is filled, crowding is unavoidable.

It is a bittersweet circumstance that more people want to visit the Dallas Holocaust Museum and learn about its mission than can physically fit, but overcrowding is an issue Museum officials know they must address. That is why officials are in the beginning phases of building a new and larger museum, and their plans involve strengthening and expanding the Museum's mission.

"Our focus, of course, will be on preserving evidence of the Holocaust and teaching lessons of that event," President and CEO Mary Pat Higgins told a *Dallas Morning News* reporter in a recent article about the plans. "But we also want to deal with genocide around the world and current events related to prejudice and hatred, and goodness knows there are plenty of things happening today that prove the reason why this museum is important. I don't know any other Holocaust museum that deals with the civil rights movement and human rights issues."

Michael Berenbaum, former project director for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, is working on the potential museum's exhibit plan and Omniplan architects are involved with building design. No details on the facility's size and cost have been nailed down, but officials have purchased land near the current Museum for the new space.

The lessons of the Holocaust – the importance of tolerance, diversity and standing up for yourself and others – are more important today than ever. Research indicates children begin developing racial biases as young as three. All people must consider how their behavior towards others are crucial in creating a world where hate and intolerance do not exist.

School children made up approximately half of the 65,000 visitors who came to the Museum in 2014, and more are expected in 2015. A second-year partnership with DISD that brings economically disadvantaged students to the Museum for free through generous donations is expected to bring thousands of students.

No timeline has been set up for the creation of a new Holocaust museum, but the need for a larger space for learning about the Holocaust and human rights in our area is clear. Please stay tuned.

— Katie Menzer, staff writer for the Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance